

Theoretical Framework for Analyzing Factive Presuppositions: Evidence from South Slavic Languages¹

Abstract

This paper proposes a theoretical framework for analyzing factive presupposition, integrating three interrelated dimensions: lexical semantic, structural, and communicative-functional. Within the lexical-semantic dimension, the analysis addresses the importance of identifying predicates that belong to the semantic category of factives, as well as their sub-classification. It then examines the impact of structural factors, including the conjunctions within the factive complement, the predicate structure of the complement clause, and the formal realizations of focus structure. Finally, the discussion emphasizes the significance of communicative-functional aspects, particularly with respect to the contextual constraints on presupposition, its exploitation for stylistic effects, and the role of cognitive mechanisms in its interpretation. The analysis is illustrated with evidence from Serbian and Slovene.

Keywords: factive presupposition, factive predicates, clause structure, discourse-pragmatic analysis, South Slavic languages

1. Introduction

In semantics, there is a distinct class of lexical items (e.g., *know*, *discover*, *be glad*, *be odd*) whose inherent meaning licenses the propositional content of their complement clauses to be interpreted as a presupposition. These words are known as *factives*, and the

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presupposition associated with them is termed a *factive presupposition*. For instance:

(1) A: It's odd that Ann is not celebrating her birthday this year.

$\models \langle \text{ANN IS NOT CELEBRATING HER BIRTHDAY THIS YEAR} \rangle^2$

However, the presuppositional status of a complement clause is not entirely determined by the semantics of factive predicates. It is also defined by other formal properties of factive constructions, including the predicate structure of the complement, conjunctions within the factive complement, the use of logical operators in the factive construction, and other related features. In addition to lexical semantic and structural factors, the presuppositional status is also determined by communicative-functional factors. This means that a complement proposition can only be interpreted as a presupposition under specific discourse circumstances.

The aim of this paper is to establish a theoretical framework for the analysis of factive presupposition by systematizing relevant lexical semantic, structural, and communicative-functional parameters. In presenting the analytical parameters, we use constructed examples from Serbian and Slovene³ (in that order), not to perform a contrastive analysis, but to broaden the empirical basis for theoretical generalizations by including multiple linguistic systems.

The establishment of a theoretical framework for analysis will be divided into three main sections: the lexical semantic dimension of factive presupposition analysis (Section 3), the structural dimension of factive presupposition analysis (Section 4), and the communicative-functional dimension of factive presupposition analysis (Section 5). Prior to developing the theoretical framework for analysis, we will identify the relevant defining parameters and precisely determine the characteristics of the factive presupposition phenomenon itself (Section 2).

2. Defining parameters of factive presupposition

In this paper, we approach factive presupposition as a pragmatic phenomenon, whose properties can be described in relation to relevant communicative-functional parameters, following the approach developed by Stalnaker (1973, 1974): (a) communicative status; (b) common ground; (c) the communicator's epistemic attitude towards the complement proposition.

² Symbols used in this paper: \models (presupposes); \vdash (asserts); \Rightarrow (entails) [*contextual information*]; $\langle \text{PROPOSITION} \rangle$.

³ In this research, we consulted the grammars of Serbian (Piper et al. 2018) and Slovene (Toporišič 1982, 2000) for reference on morphosyntactic and semantic properties.

Factive presupposition is derived from the complement clause and holds a background communicative status. This means that it does not constitute the communicative core of the utterance from which the interlocutor draws further inferences, but rather provides contextual information (Sperber and Wilson 1995, 209). It typically does not introduce new information into the discourse; instead, it is treated as part of the common ground shared by the interlocutors prior to the speech act. Furthermore, the communicator's epistemic stance toward this proposition is a belief in its truth.

In contrast, the proposition derived from the content of the matrix clause containing the factive predicate holds a foreground status and constitutes the communicative core, as it typically informs the addressee and serves as the basis for further communicatively relevant inferences (Sperber and Wilson 1995, 209).

Example (2) illustrates this communicative organization of factive utterances:

- (2) A: Jelena je saznala da ćeš joj kupiti prsten za rođendan. / Jelena je izvedela, da ji boš za rojstni dan kupil prstan. (*Jelena found out that you were going to buy her a ring for her birthday.*)
B: Ne mogu da verujem. / Ne morem verjeti. (*I can't believe it.*)
⊨ ⟨SPEAKER B IS GOING TO BUY JELENA A RING FOR HER BIRTHDAY⟩
⊢ ⟨JELENA FOUND OUT THAT SPEAKER B IS GOING TO BUY HER A RING FOR HER BIRTHDAY⟩

The proposition expressed by the complement clause of the predicate *saznala je / izvedela je* (*find out*) represents a typical presupposition. The speaker takes its truth for granted and does not assert it with the aim of informing the addressee, but rather treats it as part of the common ground preceding the speech act. It establishes the contextual background necessary for conveying the central, foreground information—namely, Jelena's discovery⁴, which is the content of the matrix clause and serves as the basis for further communicatively relevant inferences (e.g., *Since Jelena has found out that I (the speaker B) am going to buy her a ring, I will now have to think of something else to surprise her*).

3. The lexical semantic dimension of factive presupposition analysis

This section argues that the presuppositional status of the complement proposition is partially determined by the semantic properties of the governing lexical units in the matrix clause. The first

⁴ A foreground proposition in factive utterances structurally integrates the content of the matrix clause with that of its complement clause.

step, therefore, is to establish which predicates belong to this semantic category, specifically, to identify those that are factive as opposed to those that are not. In addition, for the analysis of factive presupposition, it is essential to provide a semantic subclassification of factive expressions, since factives belonging to different semantic subcategories may exhibit divergent behavior – for example, with respect to the choice of complementizers, their interaction with logical operators, and other formal as well as contextual properties. Accordingly, within the lexical-semantic dimension of factive presupposition analysis, we focus on two key parameters: (a) the identification of expressions that allow for a factive interpretation, and (b) the semantic subclassification of these expressions according to their inherent semantic properties.

3.1. *Determining the factivity of matrix clause predicates*

Paul and Carol Kiparsky (Kiparsky and Kiparsky 1970) demonstrated that the ability of a complement clause to be interpreted as a presupposition is determined by the semantic class of the predicate in the matrix clause. Based on this, they divided predicates taking a complement clause into two groups: (a) factive predicates and (b) non-factive predicates.

The first group, according to Kiparsky and Kiparsky, includes predicates that do not constrain the presuppositionality of the complement proposition: *biti čudno* / *biti čudno* (*be odd*), *biti značajno* / *biti pomembno* (*be significant*), *žaliti* / *obžalovati* (*regret*), *shvatiti* / *doumeti* (*grasp*), and others. For example:

- (3) A: Značajno je što je Marko otišao u Beograd. / Pomembno je, da je Marko odšel v Beograd. (*It is significant that Marko went to Belgrade.*)
 $\models \langle \text{MARKO WENT TO BELGRADE} \rangle$

In the given example, the predicate *značajno je* / *pomembno je* (*it is significant*) does not constrain the possibility for Speaker A to treat the content of the complement clause as a presupposition. The same holds for the predicates *it's odd* and *sažnala je* / *izvedela je* (*found out*) in Examples (1) and (2).

The second group, according to the authors, includes predicates that constrain the presuppositionality of the complement clause: *moguće* / *mogoče* (*possible*), *sigurno* / *gotovo* (*sure*), *čini se* / *zdi se* (*seems*), *verovatno* / *verjetno* (*likely*), *tvrditi* / *trditi* (*assert*), *pretpostaviti* / *domnevati* (*assume*), *verovati* / *verjeti* (*believe*), and others (Kiparsky & Kiparsky 1970, 147). These predicates typically constrain the presuppositionality of the complement proposition according to two

crucial parameters: the communicative status of the proposition and the communicator's epistemic attitude toward it.⁵

For example, the predicate *čini se / zdi se* (*it seems*) in (4) does not presuppose that the content of the complement proposition is necessarily true. Instead, it indicates the subject's uncertainty about the truth of the complement clause. Consequently, the complement proposition is interpreted as a supposition, rather than as information whose truth is taken for granted. Additionally, the complement proposition typically represents the main point of the utterance and carries a foreground communicative status.

- (4) A: Čini mi se da je Marko otišao u Beograd. / Zdi se mi, da je Marko odšiel v Beograd. (*It seems to me that Marko went to Belgrade.*)
≠(MARKO WENT TO BELGRADE)

3.2. Semantic classification of factive predicates

Factivity represents a general semantic category that encompasses lexical units which, in certain (most often primary) semantic realizations, allow the propositional content of the complement clause to be presuppositional. Within this broader category, two main semantic subcategories can be distinguished: (a) cognitive factives and (b) affective factives (Beaver 2010; Hooper & Thompson 1973; Karttunen 2016).

The category of cognitive factives includes lexical units that express the subject's cognitive attitudes toward the complement clause. Based on their semantic properties, cognitive factives can be divided into three subtypes: (a) factives expressing awareness and knowledge, such as *znati / vedeti* (*know*), *sećati se / spomniti se* (*remember*), *zaboraviti / pozabiti* (*forget*), *biti svestan / zavedati se* (*be aware*); (b) perceptive factives, such as *videti / videti* (*see*), *čuti / slišati* (*hear*), *primetiti / opaziti* (*notice*); (c) factives of acquiring knowledge (coming-to-know factives), such as *saznati / izvedeti* (*find out*), *otkriti / odkriti* (*discover*), *shvatiti / doumeti* (*realize*).

On the other hand, the category of affective factives comprises lexical units that convey the emotional attitude of the subject of the matrix clause toward the content of the complement clause. Based on their semantic properties, affective factives can be grouped into the following subtypes: (a) factives expressing surprise, such as *iznenaditi se / presenetiti se* (*be surprised*), *biti čudno / biti čudno* (*be strange*); (b) factives expressing pleasure, such as *biti srećan / biti srećen* (*be happy*), *biti drago / biti prav* (*be glad*); (c) factives expressing sadness or regret, such as *žaliti / obžalovati* (*regret*), *biti žao / biti žal* (*be sorry*),

⁵ For a more detailed analysis of non-factive predicates and the ways in which they constrain the presuppositionality of the complement clause, see, for example, Hooper and Thompson (1973) and Simons (2007).

biti razočaran / biti razočaran (be disappointed); (d) factives expressing anger or frustration, such as *biti ljut / biti jezen (be angry)*, *biti glupo / biti neumno (be foolish)*, *biti problematično / biti problematično (be problematic)*; (e) factives expressing fear or worry, such as *biti zabrinut / biti zaskrbljen (be concerned)*, *biti uznemiren / biti vznemirjen (be upset)*, and *stideti se / sramovati se (be ashamed)*.

4. The structural dimension of factive presupposition analysis

In the previous section, it was shown that the presuppositional status of the complement proposition is determined by the meaning of the predicate in the matrix clause. However, factive presupposition is not solely a matter of lexical semantics; it is also shaped by structural parameters at the morphological, syntactic, and prosodic levels. Within this structural dimension, we will examine the following parameters: the predicate structure of the factive complement; the type of complementizer introducing the subordinate clause; the presence of logical operators within the factive construction; and the formal realizations of focus structure in factive utterances.

4.1. The predicate structure of factive complement

In examining the semantics of complement clauses, Karttunen (1971, 1973, 2012) observed a distinction between finite and non-finite complements with respect to the types of meanings they imply.

In factive constructions, the complement clause is finite, containing a predicate with a full inflectional paradigm—that is, a personal verb form marked for tense, person, number, and gender. Such a paradigmatic predicate independently carries predication, enabling the clause to express a complete proposition. In example (5), the complement clause of the factive verb *zaboraviti / pozabiti (forget)* is propositional, as it contains a paradigmatic predicate that allows it to convey a complete and autonomous proposition.

(5) A: Tanja je zaboravila da je Marku danas rođendan. / Tanja je pozabila, da ima Marko danes rojstni dan. (*Tanja forgot that it is Marko's birthday today.*)

⊨⟨IT IS MARKO'S BIRTHDAY TODAY⟩

By contrast, when the verb *zaboraviti / pozabiti (forget)*, along with certain other factive predicates, takes a non-finite complement clause containing a non-paradigmatic predicate—such as an infinitive, which in Serbian may alternate with a *da* + present construction—the complement cannot independently bear predication. Consequently, it does not express a complete proposition on its own. In example (6), the construction *zaboravio je zaključati / pozabil je zakleniti (forgot to lock)* functions as a single semantic unit, conveying a meaning that cannot be derived from any of its individual components in isolation.

(6) A: Andrej je zaboravio zaključati (/da zaključa) vrata. / Andrej je pozabil zakleniti vrata. (*Andrej forgot to lock the door.*)

\models^* {TO LOCK THE DOOR}

\vdash {ANDREJ FORGOT TO LOCK THE DOOR}

\Rightarrow {ANDREJ DID NOT LOCK THE DOOR}

When complemented by an infinitive construction, *zaboraviti* / *pozabiti* (*forget*) no longer belongs to the factive class and instead enters a distinct category of verbs that Karttunen (1971) terms *implicatives*. A key property of implicative constructions is that they generate entailments. The implicative construction in (6) entails that Andrej did not lock the door.

4.2. Complementizers

In English, factive predicates are complemented exclusively by clauses introduced by the complementizer *that* (Karttunen 1971). Nevertheless, the choice of complementizer in factive constructions exhibits cross-linguistic variation and cannot always be reduced to a single form. Languages may differ considerably in this regard, even when they are genetically closely related, as in the case of Serbian and Slovene.

In terms of the simplicity of complementizer use, Slovene resembles English, as it employs exclusively the complementizer *da*, without alternation with other complementizers, regardless of the semantic class of the predicate.

(7) A: Čudno je / Vem / Vidim, da Ana ne praznuje rojstnega dneva. (*It is strange / I know / I see that Ana is not celebrating her birthday.*)

\models {ANA IS NOT CELEBRATING HER BIRTHDAY}

In contrast to English and Slovene, Serbian allows the use of multiple complementizers (*da*, *što*, and *kako*) to introduce complement clauses in factive constructions, with the choice of complementizer depending on the semantic class of the predicate⁶.

In the class of factive predicates expressing cognition, the complementizers *da* and *kako* can most often be used interchangeably without affecting the presuppositional status of the factive complement. For example:

(8) A: Jelena je shvatila da / kako je Marku bilo naporno da radi prekovremeno. (*Jelena realized that it was exhausting for Marko to work overtime.*)

\models {IT WAS EXHAUSTING FOR MARKO TO WORK OVERTIME}

⁶ For a more detailed analysis of the distribution of complementizers in factive constructions, see Ivić (1980); Књиџар (2019); Moskovljević Popović (2007); Риђановић (1981, 1991).

By contrast, with affective factives, only the complementizer *što* appears.

- (9) A: Glupo mi je *što* ideš na časove engleskog samo mesec dana.
(*It feels silly to me that you're only taking English lessons for a month.*)

⊨⟨THE ADDRESSEE ARE ONLY TAKING ENGLISH LESSONS FOR A MONTH⟩

It is important to emphasize that when affective factives are complemented by a clause introduced by the complementizer *da*, the presuppositional status of the complement clause is typically constrained. For example:

- (10) A: Glupo mi je *da* ideš na časove engleskog samo mesec dana.
(*≈I feel it's silly for you to take English classes for only a month.*)

⊭⟨THE ADDRESSEE ARE ONLY TAKING ENGLISH LESSONS FOR A MONTH⟩

4.3. Logical Operators in Factive Constructions

It has been firmly established (Kiparsky and Kiparsky 1970; Karttunen 1971, 1973; Stalnaker 1999) that the insertion of logical operators—such as negation, interrogation, conditionality, or modality—into factive constructions does not, in principle, constrain the presuppositional status of their complements. This phenomenon, in which the presupposition retains its defining properties under such structural embeddings, is widely known as *presupposition projection*. Example (11) illustrates this projection behavior.

- (11) a. Marko zna *da* je Ani sutra rođendan. / Marko ve, *da* ima Ana jutri rojstni dan.
(*Marko knows that Ana's birthday is tomorrow.*)
b. Marko ne zna *da* je Ani sutra rođendan. / Marko ne ve, *da* ima Ana jutri rojstni dan.
(*Marko doesn't know that Ana's birthday is tomorrow.*)
c. *Da* li Marko zna *da* je Ani sutra rođendan? / Ali Marko ve, *da* ima Ana jutri rojstni dan?
(*Does Marko know that Ana's birthday is tomorrow?*)
d. Marko možda zna *da* je Ani sutra rođendan. / Marko morda ve, *da* ima Ana jutri rojstni dan.
(*Marko may know that Ana's birthday is tomorrow.*)
e. Ako Marko zna *da* je Ani sutra rođendan, trebalo bi *da* joj čestita. / Če Marko ve, *da* ima Ana jutri rojstni dan, bi ji moral voščiti.
(*If Marko knows that Ana's birthday is tomorrow, he should wish her a happy birthday.*)

⊨⟨ANA'S BIRTHDAY IS TOMORROW⟩

However, it is observed (see, e.g., Karttunen 1971; 1973; Simons et al 2016; Stalnaker 1999) that certain semantic classes of factives, such as verbs of acquiring knowledge, e.g., *shvatiti / razumeti (realize), otkriti / odkriti (discover), primetiti / opaziti (notice)*, may, under the influence of logical operators (especially conditionals and interrogatives), as well as other grammatical factors (such as the person of the subject in the main clause), constrain the presuppositional status of the factive complement.

For example, the presupposition is constrained when factives of acquiring knowledge appear in the first-person singular in a conditional sentence, as illustrated in (12):

- (12) A: Ako otkrijem da nisi bio u školi, bićeš kažnjen. / Če ugotovim, da nisi bil v šoli, boš kaznovan. (*If I find out that you weren't at school, you will be punished.*)
≠⟨THE INTERLOCUTOR X WAS NOT AT SCHOOL⟩

In the factive utterance in Example (12), the content of the complement clause is not treated as known or accepted truth, but rather as a supposition. In this way, one of the defining features of presupposition—the speaker's belief in the truth of the complement proposition—is constrained (cf. Stalnaker 1999, 56–57).

4.4. Formal realization of the focus structure

Focus structure is a pragmatic phenomenon that serves to indicate the part of a sentence presenting information that is new, salient, or contrastive. Its realization often relies on formal cues—prosody, word order, and syntax—linking discourse interpretation with structural properties. Although formal features signal focus, the phenomenon pertains primarily to pragmatic interpretation rather than syntactic rules, making focus structure a systematic interface between discourse meaning and sentence form (see Lambrecht 1994, for further discussion).

In factive constructions, focus structure can influence the projection of the presupposition (see Lambrecht 1994, 171–173; Simons et al. 2016, 190). A particularly important type is contrastive focus, in which the communicator emphasizes a specific element in the complement clause in opposition to another, often to correct or contrast with a previous utterance. Formally, contrastive focus is typically signaled through prosodic emphasis on the focused expression. For example:

- (13)A: Marko je saznao da Jelena pravi žurku. / Marko je izvedel, da Jelena prireja zabavo. (*Marko found out that Jelena is throwing a party.*)
B: Nije saznao da JELENA pravi žurku. Ona je otputovala na odmor. / B: Ni izvedel, da JELENA prireja zabavo. Ona je

odpotovala na počitnice. (*He didn't find out that JELENA is throwing a party. She went on vacation.*)

≠(JELENA IS THROWING A PARTY)

In the underlined factive utterance, the focus falls on the name Jelena, which the speaker uses to correct Speaker A's claim that Jelena is throwing a party. The correction clarifies that Jelena is not hosting a party because she is on vacation. Consequently, the propositional content of the complement clause is not accepted as true but is contested. Since the speaker does not believe in the truth of the complement proposition, the factive presupposition is constrained (cf. Simons et al. 2016, 190).⁷

5. The communicative-functional dimension of factive presupposition analysis

In the previous two sections, we discussed lexical and structural parameters that may constrain the triggering of factive presupposition. However, in addition to this dimension, it is necessary to consider the communicative-functional dimension—that is, the ways in which discourse context shapes the interpretation of the factive complement.

Pragmatic approaches (Abrusán 2011; Abush 2010; Levinson 1983; Mazzarella and Domaneschi 2018; Simons 2001, 2005; Stalnaker 1974, 1971, among others) incorporate this dimension into the analysis of presupposition and foreground, among others, the following key questions: How can contextual factors, independently of structural markers, constrain the presuppositional status of a proposition? How can presupposition be exploited to achieve specific stylistic or rhetorical effects? Through which interpretative process does the addressee arrive at the presuppositional interpretation of a proposition?

Based on these questions, we propose a functional-communicative framework for the analysis of factive presupposition, which encompasses the following parameters: (a) the ways in which factive presupposition can be contextually constrained; (b) the exploitation of factive presupposition to achieve stylistic effects; and (c) the interpretative process through which the addressee arrives at the presuppositional interpretation of a factive proposition.

5.1. Contextual constraints on the presuppositionality of the factive complement

In pragmatic analyses of factive constructions (Abrusán 2011; Beaver 2010; Simons 2005, 2007; Simons et al 2016; Roberts & Simons 2023, et al., among others), it has been observed that the presuppositional

⁷ For additional structural and lexical means of focus marking that may constrain factive presupposition, see Къижар (2019).

status of the factive complement is not constant across contexts. In some cases, the propositional content of the complement retains its presuppositional status, whereas in others, this status becomes contextually constrained.

Contextual constraints on factive presupposition may manifest themselves in relation to two central parameters that characterize presuppositions: the communicative status of the complement proposition, on the one hand, and the speaker's epistemic stance toward that proposition, on the other. Examples (14) and (15) illustrate these types of contextual constraints on factive presupposition⁸.

(14)[*The participants in the conversation are friends.*]

A: Šta će Ana kupiti Petru za rođendan? / Kaj bo Ana kupila Petru za rojstni dan? (*What will Ana buy Petar for his birthday?*)

B: Marko je saznao da mu priprema žurku iznenađenja. / Marko je izvedel, da mu pripravlja zabavo presenečenja. (*Marko found out that she is planning a surprise party for him.*)

≠⟨ANA IS PLANNING A SURPRISE PARTY FOR HIM⟩

(15)[*The participants in the conversation are a journalist and the Minister of Finance.*]

A: Da li je tačno da policija vodi istragu o nenamenskom trošenju sredstava iz Fonda za obnovu? / Ali je res, da policija vodi preiskavo o nenamensko porabljenih sredstvih iz Sklada za obnovu v vašem ministrstvu? (*Is it true that the police are conducting an investigation into the misappropriation of funds from the Recovery Fund?*)

B: Ja, pre svega, nemam saznanja da su sredstva iz Fonda nenamenski trošena. Fond nije deo našeg ministarstva. / B: Jaz, predvsem, nisam seznanjen, da so bila sredstva iz sklada porabljena nenamensko. Sklad ni del našega ministrstva. (*I, first of all, am not aware that the funds from the Recovery Fund have been misappropriated. The Fund is not part of our ministry.*)

≠⟨THE FUNDS FROM THE RECOVERY FUND HAVE BEEN MISAPPROPRIATED⟩

Example (14) illustrates that the complement proposition in the underlined factive utterance is intended to be interpreted as the main point—that is, as foreground information—thus constraining one of the defining features of factive presupposition, namely its background communicative status. Specifically, the content of the complement functions as the informational core of the utterance, as Speaker B provides a direct answer to the interlocutor's question. By contrast, the matrix clause containing the factive predicate primarily serves

⁸ For further discussion and additional examples of contextual constraints on factive presupposition, see Beaver (2010), Simons (2007), Simons et al. (2016), and Roberts and Simons (2024).

an evidential function and, in principle, could be omitted without diminishing the relevance of the utterance within the given discourse context (cf. Simons 2007, 1045).

Example (15) illustrates how the speaker's lack of knowledge constrains the second defining feature of factive presupposition—the speaker's belief in the truth of the complement proposition. Speaker A assumes that funds from the Reconstruction Fund have been misused and asks whether the police are conducting an investigation. Speaker B, however, does not confirm this assumption but instead emphasizes that he has no knowledge of any such misuse. The utterance *The Fund is not part of our ministry* signals that B is not in a position to know the content of the complement, thereby demonstrating how contextual factors can restrict the projection of factive presupposition in discourse (cf. Beaver 2010, 70–71). Roberts and Simons (2024) refer to such cases as instances of *evident ignorance*.

5.2. Exploitation of factive presupposition

In the previous section, it was shown that contextual factors can constrain the presuppositionality of a factive complement with respect to two core features: its background communicative status and the speaker's belief in the truth of the complement. In such cases, the presupposition is overtly constrained.

However, in certain communicative contexts, the speaker may ostensibly attribute presuppositional status to a factive complement, although this does not reflect their genuine communicative intention. In such cases, the speaker may instead intend to foreground the complement proposition or may not, in fact, believe in its truth. The speaker relies on the addressee to recognize the discrepancy between the ostensible and the intended meaning⁹, without any intention to deceive. This strategy of indirectly signalling the speaker's actual communicative intention is often employed to produce specific pragmatic effects, such as humor or irony, and is referred to in the literature as *presupposition exploitation* (Stalnaker 1999, 51–52).

Examples (16) and (17) illustrate two distinct ways in which presupposition can be exploited. In (16), the speaker ostensibly assigns a background status to the factive complement, whereas in (17), the speaker ostensibly believes in the truth of the complement.

(16) [*The participants in the conversation are supposed to go to Jelena's birthday; Speaker A does not want to go and is aware that Speaker B will be displeased about this. Speaker A attempts to convey this information to Speaker B*]

⁹ We adopt the terms *ostensible* and *intended* from Simons (2005).

A: Baš sam srećan što ne moram da idem na Jelenin rođendan. / Res sem vesel, da mi ne treba iti na Jelenin rojstni dan. (I'm really glad that I don't have to go to Jelena's birthday.)

B: Kako misliš ne moraš. Da si odmah krenuo da se spremaš! / Kako misliš, da ti ne treba? Kar takoj se začni pripravljati! (What do you mean you don't have to? You should have started getting ready immediately!)

≠(SPEAKER A DOESN'T HAVE TO GO TO JELENA'S BIRTHDAY)

(17) [The participants in the conversation, A and B, are colleagues. Speaker A failed to submit an important report on time.]

A: Drago mi je što si poslao izveštaj na vreme. / Vesel sem, da si poročilo poslal pravočasno. (I'm glad that you sent the report on time.)

B: Izvini, molim te! Šaljem sutra. /Oprosti, prosim! Pošljem ga jutri. (Sorry, please! I'll send it tomorrow.)

≠(SPEAKER A SENT THE REPORT ON TIME)

In example (16), Speaker A ostensibly assigns a background communicative status to the complement clause in the underlined utterance, presenting it as if Speaker B already knows that he does not have to attend the birthday party. While this gives the appearance that the speaker's main intention is merely to express personal pleasure about a seemingly known fact, the actual communicative goal is different: Speaker A exploits the factive construction to indirectly convey the complement information itself—that he does not wish to attend. This use of factive presupposition allows potentially unwelcome information to be communicated subtly, often with humorous undertones, thereby softening its potential negative effect. The addressee's response confirms that the complement proposition is interpreted as foreground information, despite its ostensibly backgrounded status (cf. Knjižar 2024, 58).

In example (17), the speaker ostensibly conveys that addressee B has submitted the report (complement clause) and that they are pleased about it (main clause). However, contextual information—*B failed to submit the report on time, and such a delay is unacceptable* (encyclopedic knowledge)—indicates that Speaker A does not actually intend to communicate either proposition. The contradiction between the literal meaning and the context signals verbal irony. Using this stylistic device, the speaker implicitly conveys the opposite of the literal meaning—that they are not glad that Speaker B did not send the report on time. Consequently, the factive complement here only has an ostensible presuppositional status, since the speaker does not believe in the truth of its content, illustrating another case of presupposition exploitation (cf. Knjižar 2024, 61–62).

5.3. *Interpretive mechanisms*

In the theoretical literature, two main approaches are distinguished for interpreting the complement clause as a presupposition: (a) the lexical semantic approach and (b) the inferential approach.

According to the traditional *lexical semantic approach* (Kiparsky & Kiparsky 1970; Karttunen 1973, 1974; Heim 1992; van der Sandt 1992), the presuppositionality of the complement clause is semantically encoded in the meaning of the factive predicate itself. Accordingly, upon *decoding* a factive, the addressee is semantically instructed to interpret its complement clause as presupposed.

However, as shown in the previous sections, the presuppositionality of a factive complement is not contextually stable, which indicates that it is not semantically encoded in the meaning of the factive predicate. Consequently, the complement proposition remains *semantically underspecified* with respect to two key dimensions: its communicative status and the speaker's epistemic stance toward it. The presuppositional specification of these aspects is therefore achieved through *inferential processes* rather than through the semantic decoding of factives.

In the theoretical literature, several inferential models have been proposed (see, e.g., Abusch 2002; Abrusán 2011; Roberts & Simons 2024; Simons 2005; Simons et al. 2010; Stalnaker 1999). These models seek to explain why the complement of a factive verb is typically interpreted as presupposed. Within this inferential framework, the presuppositional interpretation is regarded as the default, or most expected, reading, whereas any alternative interpretation is viewed as a deviation from this norm.

Roberts and Simons (2024) argue that the presuppositional interpretation of a factive complement, though initially rooted in conscious inferential processes, transitions into an automatic heuristic. Due to the recurrent use of factives where their complement is presupposed, addressees establish this interpretation as a *defeasible default*. This means the addressee processes the complement's proposition as a presupposition with minimal cognitive effort, treating the factive as a cue unless context provides overriding evidence (Roberts & Simons, 2024, 723–725).

In contrast to the default interpretation, Knjižar (2024) proposes a *context-driven* inferential approach, in which the unspecified elements of the complement proposition are determined by the ongoing communicative context, as well as by other relevant cues. Consequently, the addressee infers both presuppositional and alternative readings of the complement from these contextual signals, without relying on default heuristics or cognitive shortcuts. Each interpretation of the complement clause is therefore grounded in the context. This pragmatically radical approach treats presupposition as one

among several possible contextual specifications of the complement proposition, reflecting the fact that factive complements often lack canonical presuppositional features, especially in spoken discourse.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we established a theoretical framework for the analysis of factive presupposition by systematizing relevant lexical semantic, structural, and communicative-functional parameters, illustrated with examples from Serbian and Slovene.

Within the lexical semantic dimension, we demonstrated that the ability of a complement clause to be interpreted as a presupposition depends on the semantic class of the predicate in the main clause. According to this parameter, predicates can be classified as factive, which do not restrict the presuppositionality of the complement, and non-factive, which do. Particularly relevant is the division of factive predicates into cognitive and affective factives, within which additional subtypes can be distinguished.

Structurally, factive constructions are complemented by clauses containing a paradigmatic predicate (a finite verb inflected for tense, person, number, and gender), which allows for the expression of a full proposition. Furthermore, we showed that only certain complementizers introduce clauses with presuppositional properties, and that their use exhibits cross-linguistic variation. Slovene uses a single complementizer *da*, whereas Serbian allows for a wider range (*da, što, kako*), with the choice depending on the semantic class of the predicate. In addition to typical complementizer use, asyndetic structures also occur, whose usage may be pragmatically motivated. Moreover, the introduction of logical operators (negation, interrogation, conditionality, modality) generally does not restrict presuppositionality, although certain factive classes may exhibit constraints under these operators. We also highlighted the role of focus structure, which, through formal means such as prosody, can influence the presuppositional interpretation of the complement.

On the communicative-functional level, we showed that presuppositionality is not contextually stable but may be constrained by discourse context. In some cases, the speaker may only appear to assign presuppositional status to the factive complement, while the actual intention may be the opposite, thereby achieving special communicative effects such as irony. Finally, two interpretative approaches can be distinguished: the semantic and the inferential. Given the contextual instability of factive presuppositions, the complement's communicative status is pragmatically determined via the inferential approach, which contrasts with the traditional lexical semantic view.

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TEORIJSKI OKVIR ZA ANALIZU FAKTIVNE PRESUPOZICIJE: PRIMERI IZ JUŽNOSLOVENSKIH JEZIKA

U ovom radu postavili smo teorijski okvir za analizu faktivne presupozicije kroz sistematizaciju relevantnih leksičko-semantičkih, strukturnih i komunikativno-funkcionalnih parametara, ilustrujući ih primerima iz srpskog i slovenačkog jezika.

U okviru leksičko-semantičke dimenzije pokazali smo da sposobnost dopunske klauze da bude interpretirana kao presupozicija zavisi od semantičke klase predikata u glavnoj rečenici. Prema ovom parametru, predikati se dele na faktivne, koji ne ograničavaju presupozicionalnost dopune, i nefaktivne, koji je ograničavaju. Posebno je relevantna podela faktivnih predikata na kognitivne i afektivne, unutar kojih se mogu izdvojiti dodatne podvrste.

Strukturno, faktivne konstrukcije se dopunjuju klauzama sa paradigmatičnim predikatом (lični glagolski oblik koji se menja po vremenu, licu, broju i rodu), što omogućava izražavanje pune propozicije. Pored toga, pokazali smo da samo određeni veznici uvode dopunsku klauzu koja može imati odlike presupozicije, kao i da upotreba veznika pokazuje međujezičku varijabilnost. Slovenački koristi jedan veznik (*da*), dok srpski dopušta veći broj veznika (*da*, *što*, *kako*), pri čemu izbor zavisi od semantičke klase predikata. Pored tipične upotrebe veznika, javljaju se i asindetske strukture, čija upotreba može potencijalno biti pragmatički motivisana. Takođe, uvođenje logičkih operatora (negacija, interogacija, kondicionalni, modalnost) uglavnom ne ograničava presupozicionalnost, ali kod pojedinih faktiva može doći do ograničenja. Ukazali smo i

na značaj fokusne strukture, koja putem formalnih sredstava, kao što je prozodija, može uticati na presupozicionu interpretaciju dopune.

Na komunikativno-funkcionalnom nivou pokazali smo da presupozicionalnost nije kontekstualno stabilna, već da može biti ograničena diskursnim kontekstom. Takođe, u pojedinim situacijama govornik može samo prividno dodeliti faktivnoj dopuni presupozicioni status, pri čemu stvarna namera može biti suprotna, čime se postižu specijalni komunikativni efekti, kao što je ironija. Na kraju, mogu se razlikovati dva interpretativna pristupa: semantički i inferencijalni. S obzirom na kontekstualnu nestabilnost faktivnih presupozicija, komunikativni status dopunske rečenice pragmatički se određuje putem inferencijalnog pristupa, koji je u kontrastu sa tradicionalnim leksičko-semantičkim pristupom.

Ključne reči: faktivna presupozicija, faktivni predikati, struktura rečenice, diskurzivno-pragmatička analiza, južnoslovenski jezici

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TEORETIČNI OKVIR ZA ANALIZO FAKTIVNE PREDPOSTAVKE: PRIMERI IZ JUŽNOSLOVANSKIH JEZIKOV

V prispevku je nakazan teoretični okvir za analizu faktivne predpostavke skozi sistematizaciju relevantnih leksično-pomenoslovnih, strukturnih in komunikativno-funkcionalnih parametara, ponazorjenih s primeri iz srbskega in slovenskega jezika.

V okviru leksično-pomenoslovne dimenzije smo pokazali, da se dopolnilni stavek lahko interpretira kot predpostavka, odvisno od pomenskega razreda povedka v glavnem stavku. Glede na to merilo se povedki delijo na faktivne, ki ne omejujejo presupozicionalnosti dopolnila, in nefaktivne, ki ga omejujejo. Predvsem je pomembna delitev faktivnih povedkov na kognitivne in afektivne, znotraj katerih lahko določimo dodatne podvrste.

Strukturno se faktivne konstrukcije dopolnijo s stavki, ki imajo paradigmatski povedek (osebno glagolsko obliko, ki se sprega po času, osebi, številu in spolu), kar omogoča izražanje polne propozicije. Poleg tega smo pokazali, da samo določeni vezniki uvajajo dopolnilni stavek, ki je lahko v obliki predpostavke in da uporaba veznika pokaže medjezikovno variabilnost. Slovenščina uporablja en veznik, *da*, v srbsčini pa je možno večje število veznikov (*da*, *što*, *kako*), izbor pa je odvisen od pomenskega razreda povedka. Poleg tipične uporabe

veznikov opažamo tudi asindetske strukture, katerih uporaba je lahko potencialno pragmatično motivirana. Uvajanje logičnih operatorov (negacija, interogacija, kondicionalni, modalnost) se večinom ne omejuje na presupozicionalnost, toda pri posameznih faktivih so možne omejitve. Izkazali smo tudi pomen fokusne strukture, ki s pomočjo formalnih sredstev, kot je prozodija, lahko vpliva na presupozicijsko interpretacijo dopolnila.

Na komunikativno-funkcionalni ravni smo pokazali, da presupozicionalnost ni kontekstualno stabilna, temveč jo lahko omeji diskursni kontekst. V posameznih situacijah govorec lahko samo navidezno podeli presupozicijski status faktivnemu dopolnilu, pri čemer je resnični namen morda nasproten, in se s tem doseže poseben komunikativni učinek, kot je ironija. Ločimo dva interpretativna pristopa: semantičnega i inferencialnega. Glede na kontekstualno nestabilnost faktivnih predpostavk, se komunikativni status dopolnilnega stavka pragmatično določi z inferencialnim pristopom, ki je v nasprotju s tradicionalnim leksikalno-pomenoslovnim pogledom.

Ključne besede: faktivna predpostavka, leksično-semantična analiza, strukturna analiza, komunikativno-funkcionalna analiza, južnoslovanški jeziki

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